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Chair Manning, Vice-Chair McColley, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Ohio Senate Bill 103, which will finally end capital punishment in Ohio.

My name is Alana Jochum, and I am an attorney and also the Executive Director of Equality Ohio, our state's LGBTQ education and advocacy organization. I am submitting testimony in my personal capacity today.

The death penalty is a great scourge on our country and our state. This inhumane, medieval practice has been condemned by every major human rights organization in the world and is being carried out across the country with shocking disregard for human life or the fundamental ideals of justice and equality under the law that our country and state so proudly profess.

Prior to my current role, in my work as a practicing litigation associate with a large Ohio law firm, I had the privilege of working on numerous habeas corpus cases. I witnessed firsthand the extreme injustices that can arise in our legal systems, including for people who are actually innocent of the crimes for which they have been convicted. In fact, one individual whom I have had the privilege of working with has finally been released on parole after more than 20 years of being wrongfully imprisoned due, in part, to the substantial likelihood of his innocence.

Many of the individuals currently on death row are, in fact, innocent. We know that innocent people have been put to death by this arcane practice. And to be clear, innocence should not be the litmus test for a practice that is fundamentally inhumane. Our state should not execute its residents, regardless of a crime committed.

We know that the death penalty is disproportionately used against Black people and people of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQ and low income individuals. In a system that is fraught with racism, one of the most immediate steps of many that we can take to stop perpetuating harm is to remove the death penalty as an option in Ohio.

Ohio has been assessed as falling short in 93% of the American Bar Association (ABA) standards for a fair and accurate state death penalty system. The Joint Task Force to Review the Administration of Ohio's Death Penalty in response to this systemic failure made 56 recommendations—most of which have not been addressed by Ohio lawmakers or systems.<sup>1</sup>

In reality, as demonstrated by SB 103, we know that the system is beyond fixing. The majority of Ohioans agree that the death penalty has no place in Ohio, with 60% of Ohioans are in favor of repealing the death penalty.<sup>2</sup> This issue is nonpartisan; it is one of fundamental humanity, as is demonstrated by SB 103's significant bipartisan support.

As an attorney who has interacted with our broken criminal justice system firsthand, I urge you to please pass SB 103 to end the death penalty in Ohio.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://deathpenaltyaction.org/ohio-recommendations/>

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*